



How to Use the Ladder of Inference

Ladder of Inference



How should I use Ladder of Inference to my advantage?

1. Stop! Be aware of your reasoning and and reflect on your thinking
2. Identify on which step of the ladder you are
3. From your current 'step', analyse your reasoning by working back down the ladder
4. Use tools like reflection, advocacy and inquiry to move up and down the ladder for tracing facts, questioning your assumptions and collecting more data
5. With a new sense of reasoning and more data, you can now work forward again – step-by-step of the ladder and make effective decisions

FOCUS

Ladder of Inference



Tool 1: Reflection

To become more aware of your thinking process

- Use reflection to analyse your reasoning by working back down the ladder
- When you are working through your reasoning, look out for rungs that you tend to jump
- Reflection will help you adjust your reasoning at each step of the ladder

Examples:



- “Is there any alternative course of action I could have gone for?”
- “What belief triggered this action?”
- “Am I rational or emotional?”
- “What are my assumptions, and where did they come from?”



FOCUS

Ladder of Inference



Tool 2: Advocacy

To make your thinking more visible to others

- State your assumptions and explain the data that led to them
- Give examples of what you think
- Clarify if in doubt to avoid misunderstanding
- Practice active listening. Encourage others to question your thinking
- Maintain a balance. Too much advocacy might seem like over-explanation and look like imposing your ideas on others

Examples:



- “I assumed that....”
- “So do you mean that....”
- “Let me give you an example to explain what I mean....”



FOCUS

Ladder of Inference



Tool 3: Inquiry

To ask questions from others and make their thinking visible

- Use inquiry to move up the ladder slowly
- Ask questions to collect more data and to know about underlying beliefs, assumptions, and conclusions
- Ask for examples. Avoid asking leading questions
- Practice paraphrasing to ensure everyone is on the same page
- Maintain a balance. Too much inquiry might look like interrogation, making it seem like a one-sided conversation

Examples:



- “What leads you to think that?”
- “Can you help me understand your thinking?”
- “Can you explain me this with an example?”



FOCUS